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FM AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7497

INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 4604

RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1811

RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 3601

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1356

RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2193

RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0502

RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 003464

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INR FOR CHARLIE ZENZIE
NSC FOR EPHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/26/2017

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SUBJECT: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM -- GOI TRIES TO CONTAIN ATTACKS
ON SECT

REF: JAKARTA 3442

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph Legend Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Vice President Kalla--who has close links to Muslim groups--has strongly condemned last week's attack on the Ahmadiyah religious sect. Kalla's statements placed pressure on Islamic militants seeking to use religious edicts issued by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) to justify violence against alleged heretics. Despite the GOI's best efforts, however, some MUI leaders are not on board and another attack against the sect took place on December 22. END SUMMARY.

VP SPEAKS OUT

¶2. (SBU) In public remarks, Vice President Kalla has called for an end to vigilante-style attacks on minority sects. Kalla noted that recent attacks by Muslim militants on the Ahmadiyah community in West Java (see reftel) were contrary to law and order, and must come to an end. In making his points, Kalla highlighted the Indonesian Constitution's clauses guaranteeing protection of freedom of religion. Kalla underscored that attacks were not appropriate simply because the MUI had issued a decree that a certain sect was heretical. (Note: Ahmadiyahs consider themselves Muslims, but the MUI--on various theological grounds--asserts via a 2005 edict that they are not in the Sunni orthodox tradition and should not be allowed to practice their faith.)

¶3. (SBU) Kalla said he had just met with President Yudhoyono and key police officials, and the President had taken the decision that police would take action against the militants.

Kalla also promised that the sealed Ahmadiyah facilities in Kuningan, West Java, would be re-opened as soon as feasible.

KEY RELIGIOUS GROUP SPLIT

¶4. (SBU) The MUI was divided in its reaction to Kalla's comments. Although Kholid Ridwan--a member of MUI's national leadership board--condemned the use of violence against the group, he blamed the attacks on Ahmadiyah beliefs and the government's "lack of action" against the group. Ridwan reiterated MUI's long-standing demand that the government shut down all Ahmadiyah activities, saying that only that

would ensure peace. The West Java provincial MUI chairman, however, said the Ahmadiyah community in West Java had always lived in peace with its neighbors. He urged police to prevent further violence.

ANOTHER ATTACK

15. (SBU) Kalla's statement unfortunately did not deter another assault on the Ahmadiyah compound in Kuningan. Locals say 50 masked militants attacked the compound on December 22, setting fires and breaking windows. Although little further damage was done to Ahmadiyah facilities (which were already heavily damaged), the attack highlighted the difficulty the police face in carrying out GOI instructions. The West Java police chief, for his part, emphasized that his officers would investigate all acts of violence and would not discriminate against the minority sect.

TRYING TO PUT A LID ON IT

16. (C) The Indonesian government is clearly in a difficult position. It wants to defend religious freedom--which is actually a constitutional imperative--but it is under significant pressure from religious conservatives. Given the pressure, it was impressive that VP Kalla--who is an observant Muslim and maintains close links with key Muslim groups--spoke out in the way he did. Civil society organizations have been galvanized by Kalla's remarks and have spoken out to demand that the police arrest key militants. Religious conservatives, however, are influential and will be difficult to deter.

HUME